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ABSTRACT

Intended for handicapped high school students and their parents, the booklet poses questions designed to help in planning for work. Career interests and exploration is the first topic, addressed in terms of career education experiences in elementary, junior high, and high school. Work readiness skills (social, mobility, job seeking, and job holding skills) are briefly considered. Approaches to learning actual job skills--vocational education, special education, vocational rehabilitation, sheltered workshops, public service training programs, and part time jobs--are described. Individuals are advised to begin the work process by talking to someone knowledgeable, visiting a counselor to help in planning, seeking out the kinds of instruction needed, and exploring the community to locate ways to learn desired job skills. Examples of people with handicaps who are satisfied with their work situations are cited in the conclusion. (CL)

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Introduction

Are you a disabled young person? Are you in high school? If you're not planning to go to college, you may be already thinking about the time when school will be over and you'll begin looking for work. If you haven't begun to think about this yet, it's time to start planning. If you're the parent or teacher of a handicapped high school student you'll also be interested in this subject.

Soon the time will come when school will be over and you'll begin to look for work. This booklet can help you get ready for your first job and the world of work. It's only an outline. It doesn't have all the answers. It's a start.

Four questions

Get ready for work by answering four questions. The first question is to yourself and personal. It is, "What do I want to do?" The second question is a knowledge question. It is, "What do I know about work?" The third question is the one that employers will ask you when you look for work; so, you better ask yourself this question now. It is, "What can I do?" And, the fourth question is, "Where do I begin?" This booket looks at ways to help you answer these questions:

"What do I want to do?"
"What do I know about work?"
"What can I do?"
"Where do I begin?"

"What do I want to do?"

Let's start here. Let's begin getting ready for work with this question. This question is important because it can help you find a job that you like. Many people never spend time on this question and, as a result, end-up working in jobs that they don't like. A good career plan should begin by trying to answer the question "What do I want to do?"

Okay, you're asking it! But, how can you answer it? Well, the answer can come from many different places. It can begin in elementary school with something called "career education". It can continue in middle school or junior high with industrial arts. And, it can happen in senior high with career exploration or with a work-study program or with part-time jobs. It may be a simple question; but, it can take all your school years and more to answer it! The important thing is that you begin to get career education, industrial arts, career exploration and, possibly, work-study while you're still in school so that when the time comes to find a job you will have learned enough about jobs to be able to choose what it is you want to do. Let's look more closely at what these in-school programs are like and how they can help you answer the question "What do I want to do?"

Career education

Career education is the study of the many different jobs that exist. It helps young people, like yourself, to learn about jobs. Do you want to be an auto mechanic, store manager, hotel clerk, salesperson, or computer programmer? How can you know which job is right for you until you find out a little bit about each? This is the purpose of career education. You will learn about careers. And, it can happen all during your school years.

Career education in elementary school

In elementary school, teachers can help you become aware of many jobs. This can be done in all subject areas by the teacher taking the time to think about the jobs or careers that use the information you are studying. For example, in addition and subtraction class, teachers might pretend you are making change as a teller in a bank, or as a gas station operator, or as a waiter or waitress in a restaurant. In each example the teacher can talk a little bit about each job. After a time you will have been introduced to many different jobs.

Career education and industrial arts in Junior high or middle schools

You should get active in exploring careers. Your class can plan visits to area businesses or jobs which are the subject of your classwork. Or, you could invite someone to speak to the class about a job in an area you're studying. For example, if you're studying American History visit a local park or monument and learn about the jobs they have.

Or, you might spend an entire class period on career exploration. Here you would more formally study various jobs, being certain to visit a wide range of jobs. From clerical to custodial. From police work to plumbing.

Also, during your middle school years many school programs offer a subject area called industrial arts or shop class. These classes are important to your career plan. They can give you the chance to sample jobs in the trades and industry. In addition, they can also begin to teach you some basic job skills. If these classes interest you, they offer another chance to learn about jobs and to get ready for work.

Career education in senior high school

Students can continue career exploration. Only now you might find a few work areas which you like best and spend your time "exploring" them. For example, you might take a part-time job in one or several of the areas of most interest to you. You can do this on your own or through a school program. Schools can arrange this career exploration to be a part of your official school program and you can receive academic credit. This is called work-study.

Should you miss out on career education or career exploration or industrial arts during the elementary or junior high years don't just skip these steps. Try to make them up because one builds upon the next. They should begin early in your education; but, if they don't, try to cover most of them—only in a shorter period of time.

"What do I know about work?"—Work readiness skills

You need to do more than to just learn about careers. You need to develop understanding about work. And, that's the second question you should be trying to answer. "What do I know about the subject of work?" The work place is very different from school. It's a whole new world. And, you need to be prepared for it. Your high school special education program can spend class time studying the information that a person needs to know in order to be able to fit into a work setting. These are some of the work readiness skills that you should be learning:

1. Social skills—getting along with co-workers, getting along with the boss, behaving well and looking good.

2. Mobility skills—using buses and taxis, driving, finding your way around the community.

3. Job seeking skills—using classified ads, placement services, getting your friends to help you find a job, filling out an application for employment, interviewing for a job.

4. Job holding skills—Being on time, coming to work every day, knowing what your employer wants, planning for your future career.

You should know these things before you begin training for a job or start to work. You should learn it in junior or senior high school. It's as important as your ability to do the job well.

"What can I do?"—Job Skills

Now you are ready to begin to learn the job skill or trade which will allow you to answer the employer when he or she asks, "What can you do?" A job skill or trade is an ability wanted by employers in business, industry or government. In other words, they pay you for what you can do. It can be typing, farming, welding, repair cars, electrical work, bricklaying, customer service, selling, hospital care or food service. Of course, there are many others. If you're learning how to do your first job in one of these areas, you're learning a job skill. Good job skills can be learned in many different types of programs. Some are: vocational education; special education; vocational rehabilitation; sheltered workshops; community and junior colleges; public service training programs and part-time employment. Whichever job skill program you're involved in be sure that it is really teaching you a skill that is wanted by employers and learn it well enough so you can get the job. Unfortunately, some programs are not as good as others. Your future depends on what you learn at that program. So, don't be afraid to ask questions. Make certain it's really teaching you a job skill. And, if it isn't—challenge it! Let's look more closely at some of these programs.

Vocational education

Vocational education is one of the best programs to learn what you'll need to know in order to be able to answer an employer when he or she asks you "What can you do?"

Vocational education can happen in many places. It can be offered in a senior high school, a separate area vocational center, or a community college. Or it can take the form of an apprenticeship training program or on the job training. It's a very important subject to handicapped young people.

Some of the job skills you can learn are electrical work, plumbing, carpentry, food service, masonry, cosmetology, agricultural work, auto repair, just to name a few.

Special education in senior high

Sometimes there are no job skill programs available. In this case, a special education job program may be set-up for handicapped students. It's important that such a program have close ties with the world of work so that it is truly teaching the skills employers' need.

Vocational rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation is a program which can help you get ready for work. It is set-up to serve severely handicapped people. To see if you would qualify for services, call your area vocational rehabilitation office and request an appointment. In addition to being able to offer skill training, it can help with counseling, medical needs and other related services.

Sheltered workshops

In many places, communities have set-up sheltered workshop programs for handicapped people who are not ready for work and who cannot get ready for a job through another program. Many sheltered workshop programs will give you the chance to learn more about work and, perhaps, to learn a job skill. If other programs are not available to you, look at a sheltered workshop program. And, if a regular job is your hope be sure the sheltered workshop teaches you the job skill that will help you get it!

Public service training programs

Another place to look for job training is with government training programs. Local, state and federal governments may offer job training programs in your area. These programs can train you for jobs in government or in the private sector. Handicapped people have a right to be considered for these programs. See if they are available in your area and if they can meet your needs for skill training.

Part-time jobs

There is a not so funny joke about young people looking for their first job and being asked by employers, "What sort of experience do you have?" It's a joke because first-time job lookers haven't had any other jobs and so they don't have "experiences" to tell the employer about. They can't get experience until they get a job and can't get a job until they get experience. Well, this brings up the subject of part-time employment. Try to find such a job. It gives you "work history" or experience. It provides you with the chance to see if you really like the job. It can increase your job skills. If part-time work is not possible you can gain work experience by doing volunteer work. Both can be important ways to get you ready for work. Consider them.

Where do I begin?

Now that you know some of the facts about getting ready you're probably asking, "Where do I begin?" *First*, talk to someone who you know about this subject. This can be a friend, parent, teacher, minister, rabbi or anyone. Discuss your ideas about work and what you need to do to get ready for it. Ask for ideas. Do this with several people. Begin to understand what areas you need to learn more about. Be *honest* with yourself.

Second, ask to visit a counselor who can help you with your planning. There are many counselors who could be helpful. Some of these are: the school career counselor, special education counselor, rehabilitation counselor, vocational education counselor, or the school's work-experience coordinator. Be sure this person knows about the world of work. You may want to visit people who actually have the job you want. Ask them what it's like to work in that field and how you should prepare yourself. Discuss with this person your ideas as to what subjects you're going to need more work in before you'll be ready for work. Talk about careers or jobs that interest you. Ask the counselor for information on these jobs and to help you learn more about them and what it will take to get them. With this person's help try to draw-up a plan for yourself to follow. Don't leave this meeting without a plan for action!

Third, take action to get the instruction you have decided you'll need in order to get ready for work. Participate in your IEP (*I*ndividualized *E*ducation *P*rogram), if you have one. You should ask to be present when the IEP is being discussed. Take an active part in it and make your needs known for this kind of instruction.

For example, after talking with friends, parents and counselors, you may have decided that you need to learn more about what jobs exist (career education), or about how to look for work (job seeking skills), or you're ready to begin to learn how to type because you want to become a secretary (job skill). Present these needs during the discussion on your IEP. Ask for subjects or coursework that will help you get ready for work.

If you are a disabled student and don't require an IEP but do need coursework to get you ready for work, discuss this need with your teacher.

Fourth, As you begin to make plans for your career, look around the community for chances to learn the job skill you want. If you want to become an auto mechanic, beautician, printer, electrician or whatever, find-out what programs there are to teach you the skills you'll need for these jobs. When you find the right program ask them what you need to

do to be admitted. Ask them what academic skills you're going to need to know in order to do the work. This information will help you and your teacher decide what subjects you should be learning now, long before you apply to such a program.

These four steps will help to get you started. It's the beginning of a career plan! If you think about this subject early enough, make some decisions, make a plan for yourself and do what you plan to do, you are going to be ready for the time when you leave school and begin to look for work.

A final thought

Sometimes the subject of work and careers seems too much. Add to this the challenge of being disabled and you might get discouraged. Don't be. Many other disabled people before you have traveled the same road. This section will show you how bright your future can be. And, it will show that you're not alone. Here are a *few* who made a good start in the world of work.

Norman is "mentally retarded." He attended a special education program at the high school. He worked parttime in a work-study program in welding at the high school during his last two years there. His parttime employer liked his work and asked Norman if he'd like to work fulltime. The employer read the welding test to Norman which helped him to pass the test. Today, Norman is working as a welder and both he and his employer are happy.

Two deaf students liked to work on cars and wanted to get into the regular auto mechanics class in the high school. With the help of their special education teacher, and a sign language interpreter, they entered the program. Now both are employed as auto mechanics. They perform all maintenance work including engine tune-ups. Instead of "listening" to the sound of a smooth running engine they measure a smooth running engine on a meter.

Ann wanted a job as a sales person in a women's fashion store. She learned about this field when she joined Future Homemakers of America in high school. She had lost an arm to cancer. She liked clothes and people and seemed a natural for the job. But, shop owners were afraid to take a chance on her. They were worried that their customers would be "turned-off" by a person with one arm. Confident in her ability she finally got an employer to hire her on a trial basis. As it turned out, once Ann met a customer they didn't care about her handicap. She knew fashion and they liked her for that. Soon she was the best sales person in the store.

Sally joined Junior Achievement during her second year in high school. She became interested in retail store operations. She was paralyzed two years earlier in an automobile accident. She used a wheelchair. One of the department stores in town was willing to give Sally a parttime job after school. She did so well the school arranged for a cooperative education program for Sally so that she could receive academic credit for her work at the store. In addition, Her course work during this period was designed to help her learn the trade. When she graduated from high school the store hired her as a full-time management trainee. She now manages one of the store's departments.

Jim has dyslexia. It's a learning disability. He was in special education classes in high school. During his junior year he became a client of vocational rehabilitation. They helped him decide on what type of job he'd like to do when he left high school. Working with the school, his rehabilitation counselor got him into an apprenticeship training program to become an electrician. Some special steps had to be taken since he couldn't read the text books. The special education teacher and rehabilitation counselor worked with the vocational teacher to make the needed changes. Now, he is working as an electrician with a construction company.

So, you see, it can be done. It has been done. You can do it. Begin *now* to plan for your work future. Start by asking yourself these questions.

"What do I want to do?"
"What do I know about work?"
"What can I do?"
"Where do I begin?"

Now it's up to you. Ask questions. Talk to people who can help. Find the answers to these questions. Plan. And then, GO *DO IT!*

My career plan

This is just one way you could go about getting ready for work. There are many ways. Make-up your own career plan or use this one. If you use this one be sure it meets your needs. Remember, each career plan is different. Because each person is different!

What do I want to do?

List my hobbies

List my favorite subjects in school

List my favorite things to do

List the jobs that I might like to do

List the jobs there are in my home town that I might like to do

My plan is . . .

1. I will learn about all the jobs that come near my hobbies, my favorite subjects in school, my favorite things to do. I will do this by:

- **A.** Asking my teacher, counselor, parents, relatives, friends, minister and others to tell me about jobs that come near my interests.
- **B.** Asking my teacher if he or she can help me learn about jobs (career education).
- **C.** Asking my counselor to help me learn about those jobs I like the most.
- **D.** Getting into school classes or subjects or programs that can help me learn about jobs or careers (industrial arts, work-study, school clubs, volunteer work, parttime work.)

2. I will find out what it is that I need to know or learn before I can get a job in the areas that I like best.

What do I know about work?

List what I like about working _____

_____

_____

List what I don't like about working _____

_____

_____

List the things about working that I need that I need to learn more about _____

_____

_____

My plan is. . .

1. I will ask my parents, relatives, friends, teachers, counselors, minister and others to talk with me about their jobs and to tell me their ideas on what work and working is like. Some questions I want to ask are:

Why do you work?
Why is work important?
How do you look for work?
How do you make an application for work?
How do you know when the right job comes along?
What does the "boss" want?
What's it like working with other people?
How do you dress for different jobs?
How important is it to be on time? To follow rules on the job (Office rules and safety rules)?
How do you get promotions?

2. I will ask my teacher to help me learn more about work and working—either during class time or with a special project.

3. I will take a part time job or do volunteer work so that I can learn what work is all about.

What can I do?

List all part time jobs, odd jobs and volunteer work I've done _____

_____

_____

List all job skills I've learned through hobbies, special classes, industrial arts, school clubs, scouting or any other activities. _____

_____

List the jobs I would most like to get _____

_____

My plan is. . .

1. I will talk to my parents about what it is I want to do when I go to work.

2. I will ask my teachers and counselors to help me to find a training program for the jobs that I want to do.

3. I will find out what I need to know before I can get into the training program that I decided I want to get into.

4. I will work with my teacher to make sure that I have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or instructional program that helps me to get ready for the training program that I want.